

Committee Hearing – Cheryl Clarke, Renomination CHRO

Good afternoon, Senator Looney and Representative Janowski and members of the Executive and Legislative Nominations Committee. Thank you for inviting me to testify. I extend my sincere thanks to Governor Jodi Rell for her confidence in my ability to serve as a champion for civil rights in the State of Connecticut. It would be my honor to serve once again as a Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities Commissioner. I remain humbled and in your service.

I am before you today to request reconfirmation. I remain confident that I will continue to serve with distinction and will at no time bring dishonor to the position. When I last testified, I was recovering from a stroke resulting from a brain hemorrhage. I believe I have fully recovered all of my faculties and possess the energy and enthusiasm that existed prior to my hospitalization.

You have a copy of my resume. To summarize, I bring to the role of CHRO Commissioner a strong mix of leadership, management skills and proven ability to achieve results. During the course of my employment, I've had a number of assignments that prepared me for the CHRO Commission including a stint as a business agent for a Teamsters local. I am certain that I still hold the record for being the first to cry during contract negotiations. As Business Agent, I was tasked with correctly interpreting union regulations and defending grievances for members of the local. These responsibilities are most closely aligned with the requirements of CHRO Commissioner.

In my current work assignment, I am employed at Northeast Utilities as a small business liaison officer and a supplier relations specialist where I have worked extensively with diverse business communities comprised of ethnic minorities, women, veterans and businesses located in areas of high unemployment. I am responsible for providing access and opportunity to NU's supply chain. Since joining

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NU, I have championed change throughout the organization and contributed to NU's operating successes in supplier relations. In recent years, I received an individual advocate awards as well as the corporate award for NU which recognized my efforts in supplier diversity. I am the company's single point of contact for vendor relations. I feel personally responsible to manage the success of diverse businesses.

I maintain a board seat on the Greater New England Minority Supplier Development Council and chair a regional advisory committee of businesses in Greater Springfield. I am a member of a philanthropic organization called Dining for Women. Dining for Women is a dinner giving circle. We "dine in" together once a month, each bringing a dish to share and our "dining out" dollars are sent to international programs empowering women. Through support of international grass roots programs in education, health care, vocational training, micro-credit loans and economic development, and through our members' combined donations, we encourage women to believe they can improve their living situations.

During my first term on the Commission, I facilitated an agreement between CHRO and a minority contractor from Middletown who had to file his first state Affirmative Action Plan. I think I made a positive contribution during the initial phase of my tenure and I would like to continue advocacy for the people of Connecticut. I am truly heartened by the current membership of the Commission and am quite convinced that we will be successful in our efforts to support the people of Connecticut. If my small contribution can make a difference, I would like a chance to try again.

I appreciate your attention and welcome the opportunity to answer any questions you may have for me. Thank you.